



South Carolina Department of Health  
and Environmental Control

October 31, 2008

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Administrators of Hospitals, Nursing Homes,  
Habilitation Centers, Community Residential  
Care Facilities, Adult Day Care, Ambulatory Surgical  
Centers and Renal Dialysis Facilities

**FROM:** Kevin G. Ridenour, Director  
Fire and Life Safety Program

**RE:** Fire Safety During the Holidays

Again, the cold weather and joyous holiday season is upon us, and as you are aware, the probability of a disastrous "fire" in your facility increases during the cold weather months. Also during the holiday season, with the added decorations, fire safety requires more awareness and attention.

Fire prevention can only be achieved through continuing educational programs of all employees about the potential fire hazards and how to eliminate them and requiring safe practices in the operation and maintenance of your facility. This memorandum is to remind you of a few steps that should be taken about fire safety, such as:

- 1. Use only flame proof holiday decorations**
2. Ensure that each employee knows how to initiate an alarm without delay, should he or she detect a fire. Stress the importance of notifying the fire department and ensuring that your Fire/Smoke Detection Equipment operates properly.
3. With added emphasis, instruct employees on night shifts and weekends to be alert for smoke and fire.
4. Emphasize Pre-planning: If evacuation of patients/residents is required, could your staff do it?



5. Ensure that all corridors and exits are clear of any obstructions, such as furniture, decorations, wheelchairs, etc.
6. Emphasize your "No Smoking" regulations. Be alert for patients/residents smoking in bed or other areas where smoking may be prohibited.
7. Ensure that all fire extinguishers and extinguishing systems are in good working order.
8. The International Fire Code prohibits live cut trees in health care facilities. Artificial trees listed as Flame Retardant by UL are approved. It is strongly recommended that lighting not be used. If lights are used, they must be UL listed and of the cool lamp variety. (December is the most dangerous month for electrical fires. Fifty percent more fires occur in December than any other month in the year.)
9. Do not use electrical lights on aluminum or other metal trees.
10. Carefully inspect all electrical decorations to ensure the wiring and other parts are in good condition.
11. Request your local fire department to conduct a fire safety inspection immediately and follow their recommendations. Remember that the city or county in which you operate may have additional requirements or restrictions on the use or display of Christmas trees and decorations.

If we can help you in any way, please feel free to call on us at (803) 545-4214.

<Holiday Fire Letter>

